Iron County Register.

BY ELI D. AKE. OUR GOD, OUR COUNTRY, AND TRUTH. TERMS—$1.50 a Year, in Advance

VOLUME XV. IRONTON, MO., THURSDAY, JUNE 22, 1882. NUMBER 49

The Labor Question.

Strikes and lock-outs seem to be the order of the day. At Pittsburgh, Pa., the iron manufacturers decisively refused a demanded increase of wages, and on the first day of June from 30,000 to 60,000 men were without employment. The iron men all through the West, with scarcely an exception, have combined to resist the trades unions on the ground that the state of the iron trade forbids an advance in wages. In proof of this it is not long since steel rails sold at $60 per ton; now they can hardly command $50. Bar iron, which sold at $67, has now fallen $10 per ton, and pig iron, which was sold at $26, would now be glad to find a market at $23.50. And the tendency is still downward.

In cotton goods, the condition of things is no better. On the first of June, 1881, the number of pieces on hand was 881,000. On the first of June, 1882, the number of pieces on hand was 1,443,000 or an increase of 64 per cent in one year. It is difficult to estimate the full effect of our mild winter on the clothing trade. The gap between the cost of the raw materials and the articles made of them has widened. Rawhides have risen in price while leather has fallen, and there is a diminished demand for boots and shoes. Cotton has advanced 13 per cent within the year, whilst cotton goods are at the same price. Wool has risen, but the holders of woolen goods must stand a shave that is almost a skinning. Added to all this the balance of trade is now against us; that is, we import more than we export; and the drain of gold to foreign countries is hardening the money market, so that dealers having large stocks to carry over must pay higher rates.

Under all these circumstance, to increase the wages of the operatives would be merely suicidal. So much on the side of the manufacturer.

On the side of the operative, carefully prepared tables show that, owing to speculation and other causes, three hundred articles that enter into common use among the working classes have advanced in price 25 per cent during the last year. This would appear to warrant a demand for an increase of wages, and, failing to obtain that, the ideal remedy is a strike. But is it a remedy for the alleged evil? A strike is a decision against work at moderate wages, and in favor of no work and no wages; the workman may be able to earn a living, by practicing economy, but by striking he declares in favor of starvation or dependence on charity. It comes to that at last.

But the difficulties of the labor question arise from a variety of sources and no one remedy can meet the case. This is no exception to the rule that the removal of an evil mainly depends upon the sufferer himself. Suppose that an operative drinks liquor, uses tobacco, plays cards, or visits places of questionable character: it will probably be admitted that he might dispense with any or all of these without injury to himself, and the money so saved would benefit him much more than a successful strike. It is a notorious fact, too, that the men who spend their time and money in dissipation and in gratifying depraved tastes are loudest in their complaints of inability to make a living, and are foremost in a strike. It is true that, among the operatives on our public works, there is a very respectable minority of our best citizens, but when it comes to a test they are outvoted, overridden and bulldozed by those around them.

Another part of the remedy consists in diverting labor into other channels. The Pilot Knob Furnace is admitted to be the money center of this region, but the man who has a small lot of land of his own, a few acres in grain, and a few head of cattle, sheep and hogs, need care little whether the furnace is in blast or not; for he is morally certain to make a living and to command a good market for his surplus produce. A workingman abandoning the shop or factory for a farm is transformed from a consumer into a producer, and helps to relieve that congestion of labor which so naturally tends toward the manufacturing towns. Strikes arise from the destruction of the balance between the producing and consuming classes through the preponderance of the latter, and, before the equilibrium can be restored and the occasion for strikes removed, the existing inclination of people to leave the farm and flock to the towns and cities must be overcome.

The Irish Question.

Ed. Register—I wish to take your correspondent, "T. C.," to task, in the friendliest but frankest manner, for attempting, contrary to his usual practice, to write upon a subject that he does not understand. The Irish question has but one side to it. It is simple and easily unraveled, if one gets hold of the right end of the thread to start with, but, like a tangled skein, becomes hopeless if you pick and pull, at whim and random, as your correspondent has done. He is right when he says that Ireland's sufferings are the accumulated results of internal British misrule. Calcaterra's bruised head and Judge Pillsbury's bullet-hole are the results of exactly the same misrule which we have copied from Britain and instituted here. "Its legitimate tendency is to divide society into beasts of burden and beasts of prey."

He is wrong, however, when he asserts that England is, under Norman rule, a relic of Roman despotism, though it must be admitted that England, and every English nationality, is fast approaching the very evils that cursed the Roman empire out of existence. With Harold the last vestige of Roman rule and Roman law expired; and with William came in the feudal system, especially with regard to the tenure of the soil, the most vital point in a nation's prosperity. English jurists rejected the Latin code, though English jurists, both in England and America, are resorting to all the tricks and complications of the Roman lawyers.

We are apt to suppose that a mere form of government will impose tyranny or give freedom. This is not true. Prof. J. B. Turner, of Jacksonville, Ill., said: "Show me a people in which the wealth of the country is equally divided, and I will show you a people that are free; but show me a country in which the wealth is not equally distributed, and I will show you a people that are not free, I care not whether you call their methods of government a monarchy or a democracy." Now I will add: Show me a country where the soil, the source of wealth, is held for the purposes for which it was created—for tillage and improvement—and not for usury and gain without labor, and I will show you a people among whom wealth, the product of labor, is fairly and justly distributed, I care not whether you call their system of land tenure allodial or Latin, feudal or Norman. Under the allodial system, public revenues are collected wholly from the land, so as to destroy every interest of speculation or usury in the soil, and, after the revenue is collected, the fund so derived is divided, or appropriated for this and that department of government. Under the feudal system, the lands were divided before the revenues were assessed, and the tax on feudal land supported the army and navy; that on crown lands defrayed the civil expenses; from church lands the religious and eleemosynary institutions were supported; while the commons were allotted, under certain rules, to aliens or unfortunates. Thus we see that, after all, the difference between the two systems was one more of form than principle; that the virtue and the strength of both lay in placing the common burden of taxation upon land, in which all had a common interest, and in leaving free the products of human labor. Under the allodial system, Rome, on her small but numerous independent holdings, raised a crop of men that made her strong and famous. While she prided herself more upon the results of her agriculture than the prowess of her arms, she advanced; but when she diverted labor from the development of her own fields to the devastation of the fields of others—when her small estates had been welded into large ones—when usury and slaves had done for her what usury and machinery are now doing for Britain and for us, she fell; and the historian wrote her epitaph in three words: "*Latifundia perdidere Italiam*" (broad estates damned Italy). So England, under the feudal system of William the Conqueror, raised a crop of men that made her strong and famous; but when, in the very first attempt to establish a republic, during the Long Parliament, the public revenues were converted into rents, and diverted into private pockets, and the products of human labor were compelled to do duty as subjects of taxation, her yeomanry degenerated into a nation of shop-keepers, and she has been, and now is, great only in a world where Mammon is God.

There is hope, bright hope, for Ireland. England has not yet passed the point where regeneration is impossible, but she is fast coming to the point where revolution and reform are inevitable. Her people are wakening—and public opinion is even a greater power there than it is in our boasted republic; while circumstances are educating the public mind there as it cannot be educated here. "T. C." is not a reader of *Reynolds's Newspaper*, the London *Radical*, or any of the many other British publications that are as outspokenly democratic as any journal here. Neither has he read a little pamphlet that every American, every Englishman, every Irishman, every philanthropist, should read—"The Irish Land Question," by an American author, Henry George.

"Charity begins at home," and before we waste over-much sympathy on Ireland—though Heaven knows she needs a world of it, or a little educating in common-sense political economy—we should see what the English system we have so servilely copied is doing for us. The last census was the first in which any attempt was made to ascertain the price that labor has to pay to get at the soil in "the land of the free and the home of the brave." The returns have not yet been completely tabulated, but enough is known to show that one-half of our farms pay usury in the name of interest and one-third in that of rent. Of the farms mortgaged few pay rent, but are set down as being tilled by their owners; while of the farms not mortgaged a very large proportion are rented. Millions of foreign capital is invested in land here, and the profits on the investments go abroad just as the rents of Irish estates go to absentee landlords. Examine this Irish question, as every one should, and we find that it is an English question, an American question, a question of humanity. If there is no hope for Ireland, none for England, none for us. Our business is to pluck the beam out of our own eye before we take out the mote that is in our brother's. The remedies are few and simple, yet sweeping. We must abolish all usury by refusing to enforce private contracts at law; and we must abolish all taxation except that upon land values. W. C.

Murrayville, Ill., June 12, 1882.

The Baltimore Plan.

A Baltimore capitalist one day went down into Virginia to collect the interest on a $500 bond which a town had voted to build a bridge. The bond was five years old, and no interest had ever been paid. Seeking an interview with the village president, he made known his errand, but the official sadly shook his head, and replied:

"A freshet carried off the bridge the same year it was built."

"But the bond stands good for all that?"

"Yes, I suppose so, but we have no money on hand."

"Can't you pay this from some other fund?"

"We haven't a cent in any fund."

"Can't I sell the bond to some one here?"

"Nobody 's got anything to buy with."

For the next four hours the man with the bond was very busy. He attached the old hand fire-engine, garnished three or four of the tax-payers, locked up the village graveyard, attached the safe in the clerk's office, and when the sun went down he had arranged for so many injunctions that no one dared stir abroad. The sun was hardly up next day before his interest was ready, and in less than an hour a citizen purchased the bond at a discount, explaining:

"I shan't never get anything on it, but we can't have wicked speculators come here to cast reflections on Virginia's honesty."

Nearly 10,000 miles of railroad was built in the United States in the year 1881, and, according to the *Railway Age*, there is even greater activity in the construction of roads this year. During the five months ending June 1, 1881, there was laid about 1,500 miles of track, while for the same period the present year nearly 3,500 miles have been laid for 120 different roads in thirty-six States and Territories. At this rate there will be nearly 25,000 miles of new road on the 1st of January, 1883.